

Purpose:

The survey provides data that extend and complement current data the TDH and CHRG at UTK collected in 1995 and 1997 on health risk behaviors and alcohol and other drug use, abuse, and problems among high school students². Using both the high school and middle school data will allow the Tennessee Department of Health to target the most relevant risk factors in specific age-sex-race groups with strategically focused programs to prevent first use of ATOD (primary prevention) and to reduce the adverse consequences and addiction potential among ATOD users (secondary prevention). Identification of negative and positive correlates of ATOD use and abuse (risk and protective factors) will help to accomplish this task. The data will allow TDH-BADA to place youth alcohol and other drug use, abuse, and problems within the broader context of health and lifestyle issues, including related attitudes, knowledge, and opinions, thus improving the acceptability and efficacy of funded prevention programs.

These anonymous data provide a baseline, statewide, and by region, of the levels and patterns of ATOD use, abuse, and problems. Additionally, these data portray high risk youth in terms of specific risk factors, allowing for a more focused approach to youth ATOD prevention initiatives. In addition to factors associated with ATOD use, abuse, and problems, the Tennessee Middle School Health Survey provides essential data on factors that protect students from developing these types of problems. Protective factors include whether students' leisure time is structured in positive ways through participation in extracurricular activities, including sports or religious activities, and whether parental supervision and support are present with parents and significant others consistently guiding these youth. The survey itself is seen as an important preventive intervention in its potential for focusing attention on ATOD issues in the context of a health risk appraisal, conveying school and state concerns about these issues, and allowing students an opportunity to comment and share concerns in a protected and anonymous format.

The model that CHRG used to conduct the Tennessee Middle School Health Survey was based on the Tennessee ATOD High School Survey from 1995, with a continuation in 1997, sponsored by the TDH Bureau of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services. The questionnaire used in this survey as well as the data aggregated at the regional level is presented on the Health Information Tennessee Web site (hitspot.utk.edu) under "SPOT - Statistical Profiling of Tennessee" and "Surveys" as well as under "Reports." As TDH and CHRG have done with the data from the high school survey, the data collected from the middle school survey will be available in report form and in aggregate form on the Health Information Tennessee site. Department of Health and Department of Education planners, as well as interested parents and children, will have access to these aggregate data on-line

²The middle school data can also be compared with prevalence and use data from the Tennessee School Leavers Study in 1996, and the SANTA Juvenile Arrestee Study of 1997 (see <http://hitspot.utk.edu> under Reports).